



ELISABETH GUIGOU

President of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the French National Assembly

Marie-Roger Biloa, CEO, Africa International Media Group

Last but not least, Elisabeth Guigou is a former member of the French Parliament and several times a minister. You are probably aware that, for outsiders, France appears as an Africa specialist, a sort of godfather, even more than Britain, which was equally a colonial country. When President Hollande receives calls for help from African countries like Mali, Niger and so on, he is at great pains to get Europe involved. What do you think? Are there better ways to get them involved in the process?

Elisabeth Guigou, President of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the French National Assembly

It is a very important question, and I will answer it in a minute, but first I want to say how happy I am to participate in a roundtable where there is a majority of women. It is a welcome improvement from what we saw earlier in the day, and I hope we will continue in this way.

France's military intervention in Mali was urgent and essential. Time was running out. Without military strikes on the jihadi column threatening to take Bamako, the capital, today we'd have an Islamist State in the heart of Africa. Our intervention in the Central African Republic was just as important, to prevent genocide. That was another emergency. But I hasten to add that military interventions are never the answer. They're necessary in emergencies. But the real solution is always political and up to the government and people of the countries involved. When I say the solution is political, obviously that includes development; I'll come back to this point shortly. Now, did the interventions have enough backing from European countries? Personally, I think it was normal for France to intervene first, quite simply because a bygone era that is thankfully over, that of colonialism, means we have especially close ties with those West African countries. In Mali, the European force training the Malian army has achieved results. True, there's a disproportion. Europe must become more aware that its security depends on what happens in the Sahel. I hope that as this awareness grows—we think it's still insufficient—so will Europe's involvement, when necessary, especially its various kinds of aid to Africa. I think we need a new European strategy with regard to the countries in Africa and south of the Mediterranean.

That's the point I'd like to make. I'm quite glad there's another, more upbeat view of Africa. The previous talks showed that. Africa obviously has a huge potential, in which many of us believe, to be the 21st century's emerging continent. Countries have already "emerged" in North Africa, and thankfully so, dear Youssef Amrani. Meanwhile, we must face facts. I think Nathalie was right to stress certain points, albeit briefly. The main problems are underdevelopment and the lack of jobs for young people. Youth unemployment is a blight. First, it's a moral outrage because generations are being sacrificed. Second, in addition to obviously being an economic aberration, it's socially dangerous because the situation is a breeding ground for all kinds of extremism. We face this challenge in Europe, too: France has nothing to brag about, with its 25% youth unemployment rate. From what I can see, the magnitude of this phenomenon in Africa is a real challenge for all countries. It's the major issue of development. It seems to me that Africans and Europeans, because we're the nearest neighbours, still have a way to go to close the gap between Africa's phenomenal development potential and its actual development, which is still insufficient.

In my view, Africa has two challenges to meet. The first is governance, which has already been mentioned. What does that mean? Security of investments, rule of law worthy of the name, education and healthcare systems that can foster human development. It's essential to focus more resources on education. In countries that have been doing that for a long time, like Tunisia, education of young people and women is one of the reasons for their success, which remains to



be consolidated. With regard to health, if the Ebola virus was able to spread the way it did in three countries, it's at least partly due to a lack of medical facilities. Liberia has one doctor for every 100,000 inhabitants; that's just not possible in the 21st century. The governance guidelines Nathalie mentioned are very interesting and work on them must go on.

The second challenge, I think, is intraregional cooperation in Africa. Youssef Amrani will agree with me when I say that the cost of the non-Maghreb is high. It's abnormal for Algeria and Morocco to have a closed border. Figures have been put on the annual loss in terms of growth. We know the reason why: the Sahara. That challenge must be overcome. Civil societies know and cooperate with one another, something I strongly believe in. True, there is regional cooperation within Africa and its institutions function. But despite everything, I think more can be done.

I think Europeans must change their strategy and how they see things. We need to become more aware of our dovetailing interests with Africa, a huge advantage. We're an old continent; they're young. We still have a technological lead but that won't last forever. We must be willing to share it because we need raw materials that are found, precisely, in Africa. Above all, I want to emphasize that we have tremendous complementary human interests. We're lucky to have an African diaspora in Europe and a European diaspora in Africa. Much more could be made of this, which I consider a decisive asset.

We also share challenges, from growth, the potential of which is huge, to youth unemployment, which I just mentioned. Security is another challenge we must meet together. So is climate change. No continent is more threatened by desertification than Africa, which already knows the drama of climate refugees and wars over water. The conflict in Sudan is a case in point. We Europeans have started becoming aware of this.

All of us must pull together. That means building a strong partnership. You've just said, Madam, that obviously we must turn our backs on colonialism or neo-colonialism. I am arguing for Europeans and Africans to forge a real equal-to-equal partnership based on the emerging concept of coproduction. That means trading with each other of course, but also making investments in both directions and sharing added value. Today added value is fragmented. It's produced just about everywhere. So it needs to be organised, something Asian countries have managed to do very successfully. I hope Europe will eventually say, "We need to build a vertical Europe-Mediterranean-Africa axis". That doesn't mean straying away from multilateral agreements. On the contrary, I think they're complementary. For that, the countries south of the Mediterranean must be considered a pivot between Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. That's exactly what you just said, dear friend. For all sorts of reasons, from old dynastic ties—the king of Morocco's trip to Mali was a triumph—to development and security needs, Morocco is turning to West Africa, on its southern border. Algeria is mediating helpfully not just in Mali, but also in Libya, which I hope, by the way, will be discussed shortly. It is, after all, the main concern for everybody interested in security in Africa because Libya is a hotbed of all kinds of trafficking—human beings, drugs, weapons—and an open-air arsenal nobody controls. I think Tunisia can play a key role because Tunisians feel close to the Libyan people. That should help Bernardino Leon in his mediation efforts on behalf of the United Nations to bring the different sides in the Libyan conflict closer together.

I believe that we in Europe need to rethink our policy regarding our neighbours and development. Instead of coupling proximity and enlargement—as if being the EU's neighbour automatically bestowed eligibility for membership—we must rethink our neighbourhood and consider new paths to development based on an equal-to-equal partnership and the vertical Europe-Mediterranean-African axis. Obviously, this wouldn't preclude Africa from maintaining its ties with other powers—that's quite normal. But it will spur us Europeans to diversify our way of doing things in Africa, just as Africa must diversify its economic development.

Marie-Roger Biloa, CEO, Africa International Media Group

Merci beaucoup Madame Guigou. Vous avez bien fait de parler du climat et des changements climatiques qui affectent aussi beaucoup les relations entre les pays du Nord et les pays africains. Il l'exclusivité de la Corée.